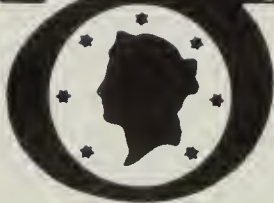


the centinel



Volume 27, Number 2
Fall, 1979

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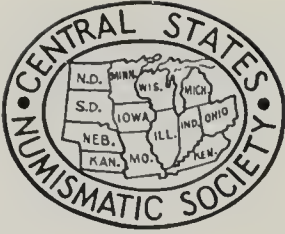
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Official Publication/Central States Numismatic Society

VOL. 27, No. 2

Fall, 1979

The Centinel and CSNS at the A.N.A.

Both The Centinel and the CSNS were at the A.N.A. Convention and we are sure everyone enjoyed it immensely. Most rewarding was the fact that at any given moment we could gather a quorum of the CSNS governing board. Early in the convention, we were additionally thrilled to learn that some of the guiding lights of CSNS were elected to lead the A.N.A. for the next few years. George Hatie, our Legal Counsel and a Past President, was elected as President of the A.N.A., and Kurt Krueger, presently Second Vice President, was re-elected to the Board for a four year term. Both A.N.A. and CSNS are winners!

Although we were spread over several hotels and motels, we did manage to communicate and socialize. Marjorie Owen, our Secretary-Treasurer, was prominent as a member of the A.N.A. Committee. The hospitality room which CSNS sponsored for one day was a howling success. A great deal of the goodwill engendered must be credited to Marje Owen and to her lovely daughter, Phyllis Pratt. They

were there with a smile and a greeting to all who entered. Special thanks must go to Bill Henderson who volunteered as a speaker for CSNS day at the hospitality. His talk on the old ghost towns in the gold country of Colorado was both informative and amusing.

Nebraska, where the 1980 Convention of CSNS will be held, was represented by a full contingent, including Larry Rowe, the General Chairman. Indiana, which will host the 1981 Convention, had a fine group present, including Don Hudson, nominated General Chairman.

Because we are interested, we attended one of the first meetings of the new board of A.N.A. A fine and dedicated group but — they seem to be choosing up sides again! C'me on folks, let's get our acts together. The national organization is no place to display our worst sides!

We would guess we are approaching that age when old and dear friends mean more than ever. At breakfast of the second day, we were joined by one of our very favorite people in the hobby, Lee Hewitt. Lee is just getting over the loss of his wife and is picking up the threads again. Lee is most respected and a former President, and now Honorary President of CSNS.

One of our favorite diversions at any convention is the ramble down memory lane. Who better to go that route with than Lee Hewitt? After a leisure-

About The Cover

A view of the very new, very modern Pershing Auditorium and Convention Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Capitol of the State and home of the top-rated Nebraska Cornhuskers football team.

ly breakfast and a nice visit, we adjourned to the lobby. In a few minutes, Mr. Hewitt joined us and brought pictures of some very early A.N.A. Conventions, plus a picture of the very first Convention of CSNS in Chicago. The year — 1939! We had a 'ball' recalling the old faces, many of whom are still around. We cherish these old and dear friends.

The better part of our second day at A.N.A. was spent in the exhibit room. After a low point had been reached in exhibits these past few years, exhibitors seem to be returning to share their truly magnificent material with us, the public.

The Bourse was another source of wonder. By now it seems that all of the choice material must have been gobbled up by famous collections, impounded collections, and by investors and speculators. However, it is still available — albeit — at very high prices, but also, very reflective of these inflationary times. Only at A.N.A. and CSNS conventions can you see some of the choice material we seek.

Because we are members of many of the 'fringe' groups who meet at the A.N.A. Convention, we ran into more good friends and acquaintances. NLG (Numismatic Literary Guild), in which we proudly claim membership, was a blast! OTACS (Old Time Assay Commissioners Society) allowed us more time to visit with fellow commissioners.

The Centinel had to depart early because we had made a commitment to be elsewhere. However, we cannot help but make mention of these officers and board members of CSNS who were present and contributed to making this a memorable convention. CSNS First Vice President, Ralph Hardman; Second Vice President, Kurt Krueger; our very dear and very busy Secretary - Treasurer, Marjorie Owen; Board Members: John Cain, Leon Hendrickson (has anyone ever seen Leon's table without a huge crowd around it?), Don Hudson, Jack Huggins, Sr., Mike Kolman, Ray Lefman, Don Mark, Immediate Past President, Harold Berk, plus of course — your editor.

We feel it is the duty of a publication to speak out when the occasion calls for it. Ms. Stella Hackel appeared very briefly at the OTACS soiree. She listened to criticism for the discontinuance of the Assay Commission and some few remarks about the crime perpetrated on the American public by the Susan B. Anthony dollar. In a fit of pique, she left the gathering. We feel it was an insult to the American prerogative to criticize what we feel is wrong. If it was the discontinuance of the Assay Commission she was tender about, she should remember it was her boss who did it! Take the lumps, lady. As a very noted Democrat once said, "If you can't take the heat, stay out of the kitchen"!!

NOTICE: AUCTION HOUSES

Central States Numismatic Society is desirous of receiving proposals for Convention Auctions to be held in 1981 and 1982. Any numismatic firm experienced in conducting public auctions should promptly present a written proposal specifying the amount it is willing to pay to the Society for the privilege of conducting the auction.

Proposals should be mailed to:

A. P. Bertschy, President

3939 North Murray Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

PRESIDENTIAL

COMMENTARY



In the last issue of *The Centinel*, Dan Parker's editorial expressed concern over the direction of numismatics — particularly among young collectors in their teens. His concern was that his recent experiences indicate that these young people view numismatics as a money making activity as opposed to appreciation and interest in the hobby itself.

While Dan's comments were confined to teenagers, the title of his editorial — "Is Numismatics Losing Its Way?" — must be of deep concern to all of us. With inflation running rampant and no relief in sight, the investment houses are promoting the accumulation of top grade coins by investors and the idea is receiving considerable publicity throughout the news media. In addition, the price of just average coins — the kind that young collectors start with — has risen

(Continued on Page 4)

NOTICE

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Article III, Section 5, of the By-Laws of CSNS provides that the President shall make a call for nominations of Officers in the issue of *The Centinel* distributed immediately preceding November 1. All nominations **must** be made in **writing** by any Regular or Life Member in good standing of the Society. Such nominations must be sent during the month of November **only** to the Secretary of CSNS, Mrs. Marjorie M. Owen.

All members in good standing may seek election to any office except that of President, which must be filled by a member who has served previously as an officer or Governor. The President of the Society may not be a candidate for re-election, and no member may nominate himself or herself.

A report of nominations will appear in the January, 1980, issue of *The Centinel* along with biographies of those members who accept nominations.

I urge each member of the Society to consider members of CSNS for elected office. It is your duty to nominate those whom you feel can best guide your organization for the next two years.

Pursuant to Article III, Section 5, of the By-Laws of the Central States Numismatic Society, I hereby make an official call for nominations.

A. P. (Del) Bertschy
President

rapidly to the point where making a start is not easy. Where this will all lead to is not clear, but it is certain that it is becoming more difficult each year for both young and old to enter the hobby.

Since our charter calls for the promotion of numismatics as a hobby, we must be concerned. Let me suggest that we renew our efforts with elected representatives at all levels of government to get control of the economy; and that we encourage local coin clubs to undertake programs to promote numismatics as a "hobby" with young people. To a large extent the future of numismatics rests on our ability to preserve its essence.

By the time you read this, the CSNS interim meeting which we are holding in Des Moines, Iowa, in conjunction with the Iowa State Coin Show, will be history. I will report on it in the next issue.

A. P. "Del" Bertschy
President

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A MESSAGE FROM THE

SECRETARY



Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Central States has a new mailing address: Box 65336, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265. Please make note of this address and send all mail there as of the time you receive The Centinel.

No, I have not been replaced — just moved. You are stuck with me at least until the time of elections next spring.

Speaking of elections, you will notice in this issue a call for nominations. Please act in this matter so this organization is truly yours! Any member in good standing can nominate any other member for any position as long as the nominee is qualified and is in good standing. Your nominations are to be sent to me at the above address.

You will notice a copy of the revised by-laws in this issue. Please remove it and keep it in a safe place so you may refer to it when you have a question.

I would like to point out to all members — you must be a Regular mem-

ber in good standing for one year before you can apply for Life Membership status. I have had to return several applications recently from new members who wished to become Life Members. You should be aware of the stipulation in the by-laws regarding this.

I had occasion to meet many of you in St. Louis during the A.N.A. I volunteered for that job in the hospitality room for just that reason. If you missed some of the fine programs provided, I'm sorry! We had a variety of slide presentations, movies, and speakers. It was nice of the A.N.A. to meet right in the heart of the Central States area.

Again, I plead with you to send me any change of address. The last issue of The Centinel has been out over a month and I am still getting copies returned for postage due. (Our mailing permit allows delivery but not forwarding.) If you have missed an issue, check to see if your address is current.

Your Governing Board will be holding its interim meeting in Des Moines the last part of September in conjunction with the Iowa Numismatic Association Annual Convention. These meetings are held in various cities within our area. If your group is interested in having the Board at your convention, please contact any member of the Board or write to me.

Marjorie M. Owen
Secretary-Treasurer

Charles Barber designed the Hawaiian silver coinage of 1883.

NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

The following applications for membership have been received
by the Secretary-Treasurer

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

3271	Fred L. Colombo	Fraser, Michigan
3272	David Gorlin	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
3273	Patrick D. Hogan	Iowa City, Iowa
3274	L. S. Hilligoss	Mitchell, South Dakota
3275	William Yougerman	Boca Raton, Florida
3276	Nick Carter	Gering, Nebraska
3277	John Wilkinson	Dyersburg, Tennessee
3278	James J. Johnson	Boulder, Colorado
3279	Natalie Halperin	New York, New York
3280	William E. Daehn	Marion, Wisconsin
3281	James Sorn	Chicago, Illinois
3282	Boyd Mattox	Fremont, Nebraska
3283	Xenia I. Kreixel	Fremont, Nebraska
3284	W. M. Carlstrom	Fremont, Nebraska
3285	Ed Bishop	Fremont, Nebraska
3286	Donald J. Thibodeau	Omaha, Nebraska
3287	David C. Staggs III	Santa Rosa, California
3288	Robert Cathcart	Austin, Indiana
3289	P. Saint-Erne	Wichita, Kansas
3290	Gary E. Lewis	Panama City, Florida
3291	John S. Ashby, Jr.	Indianapolis, Indiana
3292	Les Leroy Smith	Kalamazoo, Michigan
3293	Philip Mancuso	Hommonton, New Jersey
3294	Philip A. Dudzinski	Detroit, Michigan

CORRECTION

3216	Steve Kollar	South Bend, Indiana
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LIFE MEMBERS

188	Robert L. Hughes	Beverly Hills, California
189	Robert Wojtas	Franklin Park, Illinois

FUTURE CSNS CONVENTIONS

1980 — April 17 - 20	Pershing Auditorium, Lincoln, Nebraska
Chairman: Larry E. Rowe, P. O. Box 30011, Lincoln, Nebraska 68503	
1981 — April 2 - 5	Indianapolis, Indiana
Chairman: Don Hudson, 6333 Hollister Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana 46224	
1982 — Dates to be announced.	Cedar Rapids, Iowa

NOTE TO CLUB OFFICIALS: Interested in hosting a future CSNS Convention? It is not too early to begin thinking of the future! Submit your letter of invitation to the CSNS Secretary-Treasurer at your earliest convenience. Your request will receive the prompt attention of the Officers and Board of Governors.



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TO DISPLAY OR NOT TO DISPLAY

By Robert R. Kutcher

NOTE

The author, Bob Kutcher, is an active member of many organizations in the mid-west. Primarily, he is interested in Nebraska and Central States. He is an active exhibitor, showing a wide range of material from ancient to modern. He will be taking an active part in the 1980 CSNS Convention in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The first coin show I attended gave me the impression that the people displaying their coins were the ones who had full sets of coins in the better grades and that they were proud of their coins and wanted to show them to see who had the best set. Well, I had a full set of beautiful small cents that I was especially proud of, so, at the next coin show I attended, I displayed them. Needless to say, I was very surprised and disappointed when I did not win the "Best of Show" award.

Of course there were several sets of small cents displayed at the show and some of them were better matched for color than mine, but I had the very rare 1856 Flying Eagle cent. I was even more surprised to learn that none of the displays of small cents won an award of any kind. Wondering how this was at all possible, I began studying the winning displays and learned some startling facts.

First, I learned that most winning displays had relatively few coins in them, let alone full sets. I then noticed that the displays had included a short but interesting story about the coins displayed. I also noticed that several winners had no coins in their exhibit that I would consider rare. In fact, for the most part, they were not even scarce and quite a few of the specimens were not of the finer condition

that I thought was a must for a display. Even though I had no story, my coins were plainly labeled as to what they were, their rarity and condition. None had me beaten!

The next time I displayed my coins was at a State Convention. I had replaced several of the coins that I thought had distracted from the rest of my set. I thought that I was sure to win an award of some kind as none of the other displays that were entered in competition had me beaten for condition, completeness, or rarity. All day I watched people walk past my display, then stop and look at other displays. The judges did the same. They walked and glanced at my exhibit, but took longer at some of the others. One of the judges did point to mine and said, "Look, a '56 Flying Eagle," but I still did not win an award.

I did not display again for several years as I was sure the people picked as judges were certainly not qualified. They just didn't know my display was always the best. Then — one day while talking to several friends who usually won when they exhibited, and who, on occasion, judged at coin shows and conventions, I learned how exhibits are judged and why. From this short conversation, my whole outlook on displaying coins was changed. I learned I was not much of a numismatist.

In the first place, I was told, people who really look at displays of coins are either numismatists who are trying to learn something new, or new collectors who are trying to learn more about the hobby. Of course, a full set of any coin means little to the numismatist or non-collector. A very rare coin may impress an experienced collector but he has probably seen one before. It holds little interest for him.

A non-collector cannot distinguish a rare coin from a common date. What these people and the judges are seeking is something that is new and educational. Something that does not need long study to glean an interesting fact.

The point system most judges use today has been carefully thought out. It gives most points for numismatic information. It is closely followed by originality and neatness. It gives fewest points for rarity, condition, and completeness.

I now use this point system to judge my own displays. Even before I have completely assembled them, I have found that it pays to make a sketch and ask for remarks from friends and fellow collectors. Just by showing the sketches to friends and non-collectors you will be very pleasantly surprised by the number of useful ideas you will receive. In this way, you can tell if your exhibit has merit even before you go to all the trouble of completely assembling it.

Another point to remember is, keep it simple! Do not try to cover too great an area in either scope or space. If you do, the central theme is either lost or just too much for the casual viewer to comprehend. Be certain to keep the whole display well within the limits of the category. I have seen beautiful displays miss awards because they contained material that did not apply to the category in which the display was entered.

One thing you have no control over when you enter an exhibit in competition with others is the quality of other displays. One display may win the "Best-In-Show" award at one convention and not even earn an honorable mention at another. Judges are very human. They have their likes and dislikes. Most have a favorite subject, but because more than one judge does the evaluating, everything comes out 'in the wash'!

If you do exhibit at a show, look at all the exhibits in the show, including your own. Look at them with an open mind. Be just as critical of your own display as you are with others. In this way you will learn not only a great deal more about your hobby, but misunderstandings and hard feelings will be held to a minimum.

By following some of the suggestions outlined, I too have become a winner!

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Nothing Is Truly New In Numismatics

by Daniel C. Parker, NLG

Too often we use the term 'innovation', suggesting that something new has transpired in the world of numismatics. Actually, nothing is new in the numismatic, financial, or fiscal world. As recently as 1964 in our country we had a debasement and cheapening of our coinage. Since that time, it has all been downhill. However, this is not a new development. The debasement of coinage — money — has been going on for centuries. Note the recent devaluation of the dollar both in this country and abroad. The American is getting less and less for his dollar everywhere he goes in this world. Yet, this has been going on in various countries for many decades.

In Russia during the reign of the Czars, there were wild fluctuations in the value of local money. It reflected outside the country too. To illustrate the phenomenon, may I recite to you the following facts. Beginning with the Czar Peter I, the Great, a like story took place. Fortunately for Russia, there was not the international trade and inter-communication we have today.

Russian coinage was very crude during that era. Although they had mintage, it was mostly in the form of 'wire money'. That is, a silver wire was drawn, and to achieve some equality of weight, the wire was placed in hinged dies, struck and at the same time cut off. I have examined many, many pieces of wire money and have doubts that any two pieces are exactly alike in shape, strength of strike, or weight. Peter the Great was an innovator. Although he advanced Russian technology by leaps and bounds during his reign, minting as an art form was crude. He decided to correct this state of affairs. About the year 1700, it was decided that circular flans would be used for the making of money — coins.

Russia is a nation richly endowed with natural resources. Most metals — gold, silver, and copper — are abundantly found. Peter decided to base his coinage on the value of copper. The coins were based on this value of copper. The value was to be so many rubles per pood. The pood was approximately 40 lbs. avoirdupois. Beginning in 1700, this value was arbitrarily set up at 12.80 rubles per pood.

Now we get to the denominations agreed upon for the coins to be circulated in Russia. The smaller unit was to be the kopek, the 100th part of a ruble. Because in a nation as backward as Russia it is unlikely that large amounts of money would be necessary, the smallest denomination decided upon was the polpolushka or 1/8 kopek. It became only a one year pattern and the polushka or 1/4 kopek was minted in 1700. The denga or 1/2 kopek, the kopek, and multiple kopeks in the value of 2, 3, and for one year a 4, 5, and 10 kopeks were minted.

The irony of the entire decision was the basic value. The value of copper was arbitrarily set at 12.80 rubles per pood. Thus the polushka weighed 3 grams. In 1702 copper was revalued at 15.40 rubles per pood and the polushka weighed in at 2.5 grams. A revaluation took place again in 1704 to 20 rubles per pood and the polushka was minted weighing just 2 grams. The value remained firm until 1718 when copper was again revalued to 40 rubles per pood and the kopek shrank to one gram.

Certainly the old law of supply and demand did not dictate the revaluations — just a demand for larger income on the part of the ruling clique. Naturally, all denominations suffered proportionately.

Today we are seeing a repetition in many parts of the world. Except for the cent, coins have only a portion of their intrinsic value. The United States has embarked on a program of minting a smaller dollar and out of base metal, at that.

Perhaps it is just as well. We can draw a parallel in old Russia on why it would not be wise to mint a coin containing its intrinsic value in metal. At least copper does contain its worth in metal, but consider this: because the Czars had embarked on a program of expansion, large amounts of money were needed to support and sustain armies. Debasing the coinage was one method of cheaply financing an overly ambitious campaign of expansion.

Paper money had been tried in various of the Scandinavian countries but who in Russia would trust paper? In the period 1770 - 1771, it was suggested to Catherine the Great, Czarina, that a ruble be minted of the plentiful copper and certainly it would be cheaper to mint one coin than it was to mint 100 kopeks—or 20 five kopek pieces. A seemingly simple solution to a vexing problem would be to strike a ruble — in copper!

The copper ruble was authorized and the Sestroretsk Military Ordnance Works near St. Petersburg was chosen to mint them. Only 16 are known of the original striking. Later, in the period 1840's - 1850's, a number of Novodels were struck. All are extremely rare. Novodels are simply re-strikes made especially for those who had the connections and demanded them.

There was a great deal of this at the Russian mints during this era. Actually, the novodels are more beautiful, probably because of better technology. The originals as well as the novodels range in diameter from 76mm - 80mm. Thickness of the ruble was from 25.5 mm - 27mm. However, a duplicate of one of the Hermitage specimens

which sold at auction in 1932 was 30 mm thick. Weight ranged from 1020 grams to 1055 grams. Imagine carrying around 40 rubles, each of which exceeded 2 lbs. in weight! It must have been as clumsy as Swedish Plate money.

The Hermitage Collection (The Russian National) possesses by far the largest number of the Sestroretsk rubles. Only one of the original strikes is not now pedigreed. It was sold in 1955 by Coin Galleries and has not been seen since that time. Too bad! The writer would love to see one as the coin is certainly deserving of much study. We are indebted to Dr. I. G. Spasky for a studious article on the Sestroretsk ruble and to careful research by B. F. Brekke.

The Brekke book, "The Copper Coinage of Imperial Russia 1700-1917," contains numerous pictures of the ruble. We are properly impressed and awed by this most beautiful coin and hope to one day view the specimen in the Smithsonian Institution.

Die breaks on some 1922 Peace Dollars make the portrait of Liberty appear to have a moustache.

An Apology!

Your Editor "goofed" on the cover of the last issue. We neglected to identify the figures on the cover. From the top left: Ray Lefman, Medal of Merit Chairman. Clockwise: Speakers at the Forum . . . John J. Gabriel, Jackson Storm, Moderator Dan Parker, and Steve Taylor. The 40th Anniversary cake; Marjorie Owen presenting the CSNS Junior Best-In-Show to Marilyn Schwartz; The Joe Stack traveling trophy and General Chairperson Helen Sedo; Junior Exhibitors; Lefman receiving the Krause Publications "Numismatic Ambassador Award; and a view at the banquet.

SO YOU WANT TO COLLECT COINS ?

No. 1 of a Series — Daniel C. Parker, NLG

So you want to collect coins? A pleasant hobby which can become rewarding in more ways than one. However, the hobby should be approached intelligently. Collecting coins is a quite natural pursuit. After all, we handle the stuff daily. From time to time, we may run into an odd or 'different' coin. It intrigues us and we put it away for a later time. We come back to it and wonder what it is and where it came from. Now we are on the way to becoming 'hooked'!

The writer became a collector quite by accident. As Treasurer of his Church and a bowling league, we were handling a large volume of coins. Now and then we ran across an old coin, a coin that was different from those we were accustomed to seeing day in and day out. We carefully put them away. Eventually, it added up to a cigar box full! What do we do with these uncommon coins?

We stopped in at a neighborhood coin shop, asked a few questions, and were handed a "Red Book". Slowly we were on our way to becoming a Numismatist. Webster defines a 'Numismatist' as "one who is versed in the science of coins and medals". Well, we weren't exactly 'versed' but we were willing to become "versed"! Simply put, the pursuit of a little knowledge led us into a lifetime of pleasure, recreation, and in many cases, pure joy!

Thirty-five years ago, collectors were relatively few. Scarce dates, yes, and even rare dates could be picked out of circulation. Believe it or not, we completed a 'set' of Walking Liberty' half dollars in about 10 weeks. That first set is still intact and as we became more knowledgeable, we began putting a much better quality set

together. Becoming smarter is the key to the many happy hours we have spent in our beloved hobby.

In the beginning, we were stupid enough to make every mistake an uneducated collector can make. We remember well dropping a 1921D half back into circulation because we 'already had one'! We believe we must have let at least ten 1924D cents go back into rolls because we didn't need another.

Eventually, in conversation with other collectors, we were 'wised' up that these were highly tradeable coins and we could realize that another collector was willing to swap something he had for one of the scarcer dates. Fact is, we stopped back to the same coin shop that had sold us the Red Book originally and discovered that the dealer was willing to trade us a choice coin for 10 / 20 — or a roll of a coin we were 'flush' with.

We recall well the acquisition of our first \$20 gold piece. It cost us a bit of patience and \$2 cash! Yes, we traded a roll of 1939D nickels for the gold piece. At one time we were the proud possessors of seven rolls of 1931D cents, all fine and better. These were acquired piece by piece from other collectors who had a few in stock and were willing to trade them away for other coins they needed. But now, we had become educated to the wherefors of collecting intelligently. The 1931D's were all in very acceptable condition and eventually they were what made a type set of gold within our budget.

By all means, get that Red Book, Blue Book, or whatever. It will be your guide to enjoyment and fulfillment. A word of warning! Don't spread yourself too thin!! Collect only what you can afford. Don't expand

into too many directions. It will only frustrate you and take a lot of the pleasure out of your hobby.

(The next issue of The Centinel will bring you a continuation of this series. It will attempt to direct you into the many ways which coins can be collected. By size, composition, device, shape, etc., etc.)

The heraldic eagle is an eagle with legs and wings apart in a display manner. It may also bear other symbols.

Michigan State Numismatic Society Elects Officers

The newly elected officers of the Michigan State Numismatic Society for term 1979-1980 are as follows:

Florence Schook, President; Harry Tiemann, First Vice President; Don Charters, Second Vice President; Pam Kocembo, Secretary; Helen Bernauer, Treasurer. On the Board are Mary Gail Beneteau, Dorothy Bigham, Max Brail, Vera Braun, Lucian Chojecki, Charles Fenwick, Ralph Hinkle, Burt Kirsch, Robert Kole, Joe Overstreet, William Shields and Esther Zabowski.

Mr. P. H. "Jim" Frans, Past President, and Thomas Klunzinger, Editor of the Mich-Matist, are also members of the Board. George Hatie is Legal Counsel for the Society, as well as one of the Past Presidents of the Michigan State Numismatic Society.

The MYN (Michigan Young Numismatists) also have new officers and they are: Joe LeBlanc, President; Marilyn Schwartz, Vice President; and Paula Lyson, Secretary. All are experienced exhibitors and active in all phases of numismatics; they will assist Florence Schook with the Michigan Young Numismatist program.

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California Gold

By Dan Parker, NLG

One of the most fascinating items the collector can get interested in is the private coinage of California, particularly the tiny fractional gold tokens. However, before the collector gets into acquiring any of these tiny 'jewels' he should either study something of them or consult an expert. We advise this step because the market is flooded with expertly manufactured replicas, in no way marked that they are copies.

The feeling the experienced collector gets when he sees these copies is that they were made with the express intention of fooling the neophyte. They are not counterfeits according to the law. They are tokens and unless explicitly advertised as being genuine, counterfeiting laws do not apply! Laws governing misrepresentation in advertising do apply in these cases.

The California gold tokens come in the following denominations: the $\frac{1}{4}$ dol. or dollars; the $\frac{1}{2}$ dol., and the one dollar. The term dol. or dollar is used on the token and appears just below the fraction on the reverse side of the token. The tokens may be either the Indian Head or Liberty Head on the obverse. The reverse has the fraction usually inscribed in the wreath.

In order to fully appreciate the tokens, one must know something of the history of the gold strike in California. Although the gold miners in California were called the 49ers, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in January of 1948. John Marshall, an employee of Sutter, discovered gold in the riffle flume emanating from the mill quite accidentally. The riffle flume was the trough erected to channel water back to the creek after it had run the wheel of the mill.

In order to lessen wear on the rough planks constituting the flume, it was

common practice to nail cleats along the bottom to slow the gravel bearing water. In the eddy of one of these cleats, John Marshall discovered some flakes of gold. Gold is much heavier than gravel and has a tendency to settle to the bottom of any deposit. (More about that later.) Poor old Sutter, he finally went broke in mind and body because he profited not one cent from the discovery of gold at his mill!

Although the gold strike was made in January of 1848, news of the strike did not reach New York or the east coast until late August or possibly in September. With cold weather approaching, only a fool or the very foolhardy would start on the long, 3,000 mile trek to California. Thus, the great migration westward did not begin until the Spring of 1849. Hence, the 49ers!

The population of California prior to the strike was estimated at 15,000. By the summer of 1849, it had ballooned up to 100,000 or more. Were these new arrivals rich? Not hardly! They came, most of them, with nothing more than the hopes of 'striking it rich'! Very little in the form of hard cash came with them. With the seven fold multiplication in population came a tremendous shortage of coins. Transactions were completed by exchanging gold 'dust' for the commodity or service desired.

Most merchants were scrupulously honest, carefully weighing out the dust. However, there were the usual fast buck artists who had no scruples. Ordinarily, it took a 'pinch' of dust to buy a shot of red-eye. Here the ham-handed barkeep took advantage of the hard working miner. His pinch of dust was certainly not one of the delicate schoolmarm. The miner worked hard, played hard, and demanded a fair deal in transacting his business. Soon, some smart chap decided that the gold could be made into coins or tokens of a sort.

Kenneth Lee, one of the foremost authorities on California Gold Token, insists the dies for the California private mintage were made by Swiss jewelers. It is our logical conclusion that although there may have been a few Swiss jewelers in California in 1849, they were kept far too busy making dies for the Assayers: Moffat & Co., Augustus Humbert, etc. These private minters and assayers struck \$5, \$10, and \$20 pseudo coins, and even \$50 'slugs'! Burnie lists more than 740 die varieties of the California Gold Token. It is our guess that more than half of these were made by gunsmiths.

Logically, which would be the more likely to be present on a frontier, the Swiss jeweler or the gunsmith? Having a brother who is an authority on antique guns, I have seen many, many most beautiful works of art on the barrels and stocks of guns. Delicate scrollwork, monograms, floral representations, etc., were worked into the metal of the mechanism and barrel and then filled with gold and silver wire. Yes, the gunsmith had both the know-how and the ability to do die work.

Perhaps it was his unfamiliarity with placement that had him make the first token dies in an octagonal shape so he could cut off excess at the edges. Odd, isn't it, that some of the counterfeit tokens we have seen recently have more gold in them than the genuine article? However, when you price them, you can understand why the counterfeit can afford to make them so good!

Some years ago, this writer had the opportunity to combine two of his hobbies into the great adventure. We do own scuba gear and have practiced diving for some years. On one of our vacation trips to the west coast, we naturally carried along our diving gear. In one of the High Sierra communities, we ran into a couple of chaps who also dove — but not in deep water

(Continued on Page 18)

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of the ocean — but rather in the cold mountain streams of the Sierras. It was along these mountain streams that the California 49ers mined their gold. Our newly found friends had an every weekend adventure. A party of three or four would journey out to one of these fast running mountain streams and the fun would begin.

One man, or perhaps two, would don their 'wet suits', enter the stream, and then look for ledges or sharp bends. As the water gouges at the banks of the creek, it also erodes quantities of gold bearing gravel. As the water tumbles over rock outcroppings or makes a sharp bend, it slows enough to deposit the gold flakes which are much heavier. It is at these spots the new style 'miners' found pay dirt. We would sink to the bottom and scoop the lowest strata of gravel into plastic bags. These were brought to shore and the others of the party would then pan this gravel. As the pans were 'sloshed' and swirled, the lighter gravel would wash away and in the bottom of the pan — Eureka — instant wealth!!

Two days of panning and diving netted us about \$325 in gold. (This at the old \$42 per ounce price.) You wonder why someone doesn't make a career of this new method of gold mining? Simple! My companions were respected business and professional people who did it for the adventure and fun. We can only report to you that after hours of immersion in the 40 degree water, our every joint ached for three days afterwards. Hard, gruelling work, but only fun when done just for the fun of it.

Perhaps we haven't taught you much about the California Gold Token, but hopefully, we have cleared in your mind the rugged life the 49er had to cope with. He was the pioneer who endured. He wintered in an area where snows can exceed 100 feet in depth. Supplies had to be brought in months early, either by mule or burro. Or packed in on the back of that rugged 49er.

As an aside, it is said that the streets of Auburn, Calif., are paved with gold. All too true. Auburn bought tailings of the mines in the area to use in mixing the concrete the streets are made of. A very competent metallurgist assayed this concrete and found that it contained approximately \$1.75 per ton in gold. With the price of gold now above \$300 per ounce, maybe Auburn will start an urban renewal project of its own!

In Charlottesville, Va., two grocery clerks have inherited 120 gallons of coins and bank notes. Aubrey Wood, the grocer, who did not have any immediate family, died recently. He left his entire estate, the above mentioned 120 gallons of coins and bank notes, the store, and his home to the two clerks who had worked for him for 15 years!!

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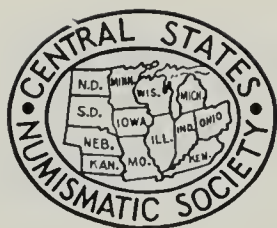
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